

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTERIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

JULY 2011

E MAIL

PKBedwell@hotmail.com

Web page

Bedwellglobalministeries.com

THE VISION WHICH TRANSFORMS

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 6:1-8.

Introduction

It was Thomas Carlyle who said that “the history of the world is but the biography of great men.” But it is also true that the history of Israel is the biography of the great prophets of God. They were distinct in that the calling of God upon their lives was a fire in their bones and there was a deep awareness of the holiness of God. It was this awareness that gave direction to their message and a fearless inner compulsion to declare the Word of God. The prophet Isaiah was such a man. In the scriptures he stands as one of the greatest prophets in Jewish history. His name means “salvation is of the Lord.” It has been said of him that he died with the gospel on his lips. No where do we find the promise of the coming of Jesus the Messiah more clearly announced than in His writings. It is thought that he was of royal blood but he was a remarkable prophet of Judah and ministered during the reign Uzziah, Jotham, Ahab and Hezekiah. He was a courageous prophet who like Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He boldly spoke out against drunkenness, idolatry, witchcraft, corruption, and even

provocative women's fashions. All of this can be found in chapters 1-5. One of the great Kings under whom the prophet served was King Uzziah. Uzziah had come to the throne of Judah when he was sixteen years old. And from an early age he determined to seek and serve God, the consequences of which brought about a remarkable period of peace and prosperity. The scripture sets it before us in 1 Chronicles 26:5 "As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success." Through a series of victorious military campaigns against his enemies he recovered much lost territory for his people. But he also brought about internal development and prosperity. He built towers and great water tanks. He planted and cultivated the land and encouraged and increased the raising of stock. He reigned for fifty two years. And it was a wonderful reign up to a certain point but this success led to pride and the man who had overcome the danger of adversity was defeated by the danger of prosperity and success. The Bible records in 2 Chronicles 26:16, but after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. His sin was inexcusable for he went into the temple and usurped one of the functions of the priest and offered incense and he was stricken with leprosy and he ultimately died a leper's death. It was in the midst of this crisis that the Prophet Isaiah went into the temple where he had an encounter with God. In the moment he had He had a vision of the Lord. But what many do not realize that this crisis was intensified by the Assyrians who were sweeping south in to Israel and as one was vividly written "they were gobbling one city after another." Jerusalem was buzzing. The people trembled, "who was going to keep the blood thirsty Assyrians from ransacking the city? ((What ever became of Holiness - Deneff p. 24.) It was in the temple where the prophet had a vision of God that the answer was found. It was a vision that transformed the life of the prophet. The vision was significant in that it brought into perspective the crisis which the nation faced. The vision brought God into the center of the total picture. God revealed Himself in His power of His person and the glory of His holiness to the prophet, and this revelation impressed upon the prophet that the Lord was above the crisis in which the nation found itself. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord

he became conscious of three truths about God that transformed his perspective on this critical moment in the history of God's people. He was deeply aware of,

1. THE IMMENSITY OF GOD, OR THE GREATNESS OF GOD. Isaiah 6:1-3.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.....the whole earth is full of His Glory." The immensity of God is manifested in two ways. First, he came to the recognition that

a. God is Ageless or God is timeless. Isaiah 6:1-3. The prophet ventured into the presence of God. He took time to move into the house of God. There he saw an eternal King. In the midst of death he had the vision of an eternal God. He is above time. The deep sense of the loss of the earthly king he idolized had moved him from the vision of a dead king, the environment of an earthly court, the magnetism of earthly glitter and the magnificence of earthly pomp into a heavenly court, and he discovered that these things upon which man placed so much importance were but transient tinsel. He discovered that there was a throne occupied by an eternal King, whose surroundings were filled with radiant dazzling glory and whose courts were bathed in the white blinding light of God's holiness. The prophet took time to enter into God's presence allowing that presence to flood his spirit. Everything of earthly glitter, glory and value paled into insignificance in the light of what he saw that day. Everything of earthly significance suddenly became insignificant in the presence of God. He became aware of the eternity of God. The prophet later in chapter 57:15 describes the "Lord as the one who inhabits eternity." John Stott points out that when we think of God as eternal, we must not think of Him as enduring before time was, until time is no more, with a memory that reaches back to the beginning of things and the foresight which anticipates an endless future." When God is described as "the Eternal One" it means that "He is completely liberated from the world of time in

which we live." In the midst of death and uncertainty the prophet becomes aware of the eternity of God. God is ageless. But the prophet also became aware that,

b God is Matchless. Isaiah 6:1-3. Who can compare with Him? There is none as great as He is. The prophet saw as the "Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted and the train of His robe filled the temple.....and the whole earth is full of His glory." This vision of the greatness of God came at a critical time in the

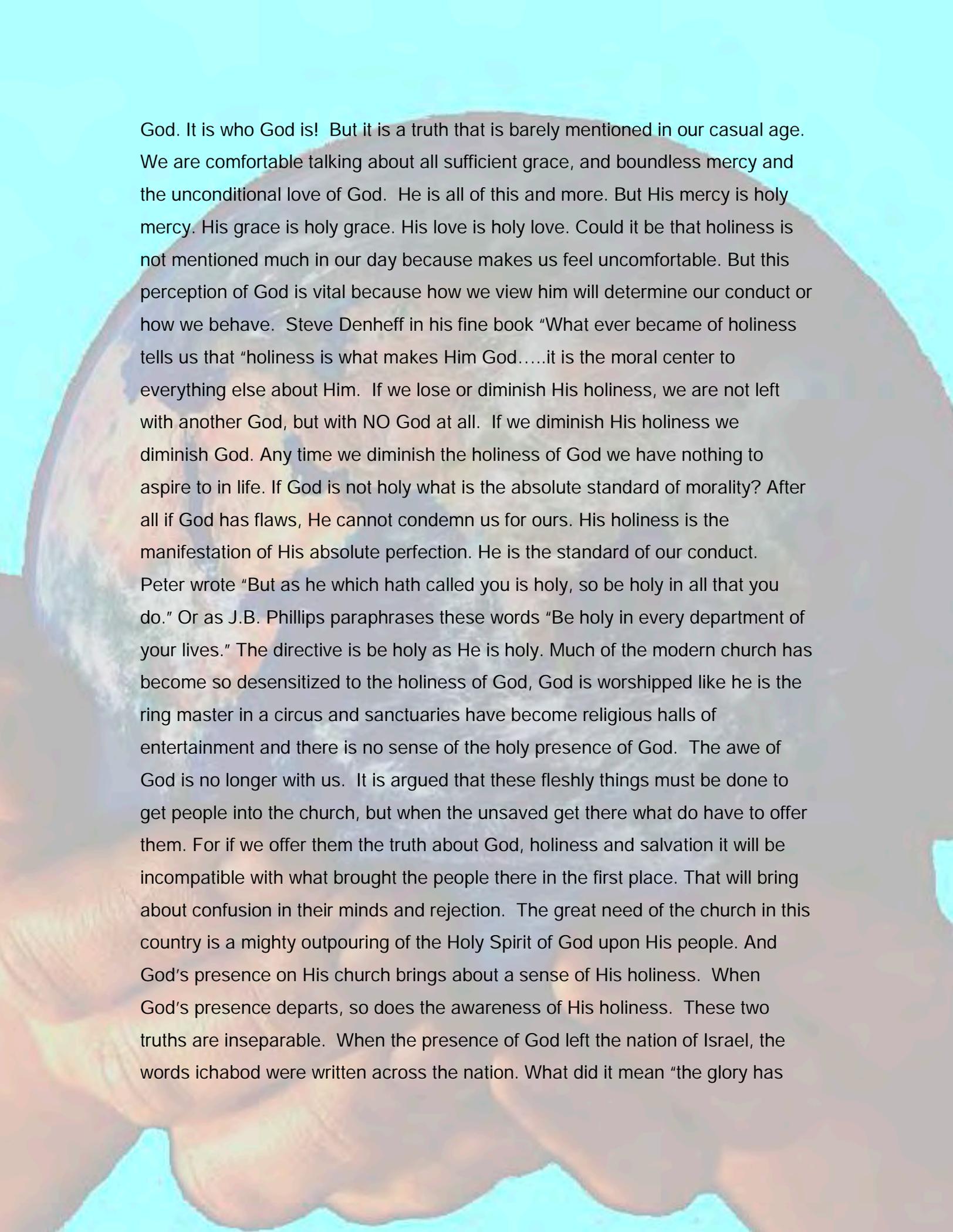
history of the nation. There is no God who compare with Him. **The people had become wrapped up in the greatness of an earthly king, his achievements, his abilities, and his skill. Their spiritual sensitivities had been dulled by the comfort of prosperity.** King Uzziah led them into it. The economy was going well, but they had lost sight of eternal greatness of God. It was overshadowed by the greatness and the glory of an earthly king and transient values and priorities. The stuff of the earth, however, was limited. It was restricted to by its own weakness. There were things to which they were not equal. And now the nation was faced with a crisis. Everything the nation had achieved on the temporal level was not equal to the formidable situation that faced it. Its abundant prosperity and the lingering shadow of a dead king, no matter how great, could not match the situation with which it was confronted. Their king had died a leper's death and now the nation was a facing grave situation and extreme danger. In this hour the Prophet Isaiah had a vision of the greatness of the eternal God. Everything of the earth faded into insignificance in the light of that glory. At the funeral service of Louis 14th of France, the great cathedral was packed with mourners from all walks of life who had come to pay their last tribute to their king. To them he had been a great ruler the symbol of the security and power on their nation. The great sanctuary was dark. One lone candle illumined the massive ornate gold casket. The candle had been lit to symbolize the greatness of the king. It flickered uncertainly in the darkness casting trembling shadows around the casket. Massillon the court preacher stood to speak. As he arose, he paused a moment and looked at that flickering candle, which spoke of the greatness of the late king;

and then deliberately with an almost casual gesture, he reached out with two fingers and snuffed the out the candle and from the cold darkness of the cathedral spoke only four words as he commenced his sermon. "God only is great." This earthly king's greatness was swallowed up by the darkness of death. This was the discovery that Isaiah made when he saw the Lord in Temple. But the prophet was not only conscious of the immensity of God. He was also conscious of the,

2. THE SANCTITY OF GOD OR THE HOLINESS OF GOD. Isaiah 6:3.

The seraph made this clear "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." The prophet learned in that moment that God's glory and holiness is,

a. An Indisputable Fact. Isaiah 6:3. The Seraph's declared it! The Holiness of God was the central theme of their announcement. Holiness is not just one of the attributes of God. It is who God is. It is His very nature. Every ten times God is mentioned in the scriptures, 7 times he is referred to as being HOLY. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty." This signifies the completeness of Divine perfection which separates God from His creation." (P. 242 – Young). This vision of a holy God impacted the prophet. His favorite designation for God was 'The Holy One of Israel.' Twelve times in chapters 1-39 he uses this designation and fourteen times in chapters 40-66." (Young p. 244.) He is holy to the superlative degree. He is holy to the highest level possible. Never does the Bible say Love! Love! Love! And God is love. Nor is He referred to as Mercy! Mercy! Mercy! And He is merciful. Nor is described as Grace! Grace! Grace! And He is the God of all grace. Holy describes who God is. God sought to burn this dynamic truth into heart of the prophet. The threefold use of the word holy intensifies the meaning of it. But the use of this word is the only place in the Old Testament where a characteristic is repeated again and again, and it done to give us the impression of something that is far beyond our understanding and that is far deeper than our minds can grasp, and so holiness is not simply as attribute or characteristic of



God. It is who God is! But it is a truth that is barely mentioned in our casual age. We are comfortable talking about all sufficient grace, and boundless mercy and the unconditional love of God. He is all of this and more. But His mercy is holy mercy. His grace is holy grace. His love is holy love. Could it be that holiness is not mentioned much in our day because makes us feel uncomfortable. But this perception of God is vital because how we view him will determine our conduct or how we behave. Steve Denheff in his fine book "What ever became of holiness tells us that "holiness is what makes Him God.....it is the moral center to everything else about Him. If we lose or diminish His holiness, we are not left with another God, but with NO God at all. If we diminish His holiness we diminish God. Any time we diminish the holiness of God we have nothing to aspire to in life. If God is not holy what is the absolute standard of morality? After all if God has flaws, He cannot condemn us for ours. His holiness is the manifestation of His absolute perfection. He is the standard of our conduct. Peter wrote "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do." Or as J.B. Phillips paraphrases these words "Be holy in every department of your lives." The directive is be holy as He is holy. Much of the modern church has become so desensitized to the holiness of God, God is worshipped like he is the ring master in a circus and sanctuaries have become religious halls of entertainment and there is no sense of the holy presence of God. The awe of God is no longer with us. It is argued that these fleshly things must be done to get people into the church, but when the unsaved get there what do have to offer them. For if we offer them the truth about God, holiness and salvation it will be incompatible with what brought the people there in the first place. That will bring about confusion in their minds and rejection. The great need of the church in this country is a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God upon His people. And God's presence on His church brings about a sense of His holiness. When God's presence departs, so does the awareness of His holiness. These two truths are inseparable. When the presence of God left the nation of Israel, the words ichabod were written across the nation. What did it mean "the glory has

departed.” There is no greater indictment from heaven than this. God is Holy that is where we start. Everything must flow from that truth. It is an indisputable fact but it is also,

b. An Irresistible Force. Isaiah 6:5. This is revealed in two responses. There is first of all,

i. The Prophet's Response. Isaiah 6:5. The holiness of God is revealing and penetrating. It exposes what is in the soul. Isaiah saw himself as he really was. One thing is sure he did not enter in the presence of a Holy God with a smile on his face. He saw Himself as God saw him. and a cry was wrenched from the inner depths of his soul, “woe to me, I am ruined for I am man of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Glory.” The prophet saw with dismay and despair the corrupt condition of his own heart, and cried out, “I am ruined! Literally I am coming apart at the seams! I’m cut off I’m lost. It was in the presence of a Holy God that the prophet discovered the true condition of his soul and openly confessed his sinfulness. So many in the contemporary evangelical movement are so concerned about not offending people, that that they avoid talking about holiness of God. A. W. Tozer preached about the holiness of God at the great gatherings of this nation, but he preached himself off the convention platforms because his message was too uncomfortable. He proclaimed the holiness of God with power and conviction and was rejected. The holiness of God will make its impact on the sinful heart of man and bring conviction to his conscience. Sin cannot be hidden in the light of His holiness. This is absolutely vital to personal salvation. You cannot have salvation unless first there is the conviction of inward personal sin. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit came into the world to convict it of sin. If there is no conviction of sin there is no godly sorrow for it, and it is godly sorrow that leads to repentance and in turn that leads to salvation. If there is no diagnosis there is no cure. The prophet saw his sinful condition and his confession of his condition was and it was so because he stood within the orbit of god’s glory. Edwin Alexander “this is why God summons us in

the Scriptures to consider the holiness, the flaming glory of His character. It is because there and there alone do we see ourselves as we really are; where all our hypocrisy and pretence is burned up and we stand exposed before God. This is God with whom we have to do. Was it not Robert Murray McCheyne who said "What a man is on his knees before God that he is and nothing more." The prophet saw his sinful condition and his confession of his condition is illuminating. It has the necessary ingredients to receiving the forgiveness of God and the work of heart cleansing. As one has pointed out, his confession was,

A. HUMBLE. **Isaiah 6:5. "Woe to me I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips." The prophet came to the end of himself. "I am ruined!" Young tells us that in one word ruined Isaiah expressed this thought.** "I have been made to cease, I am cut off, undone, doomed to die." (P. 247). That was the terrifying evaluation of himself in the light of the holiness of God." His humble confession of his sinfulness was made in the light of the presence of a Holy God. But this vision of himself was the necessary precondition to his cleansing. His extremity was God's opportunity to bring a purging to his soul. The holiness of God has a distilling purifying effect on the conscience and soul of a man. A humble spirit will get the attention of a holy God, for "He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." Secondly the confession of the prophet was,

B. PERSONAL. **Isaiah 6:5. "Woe to me....." was his cry.** In chapter five he had uttered six woes on the nation what when he saw himself as he really was in the light of God's holiness, he uttered the seventh woe himself. His was a personal confession. The well known spiritual has it right, "Its' me its' me O Lord standing in the need of prayer. Not my brother, nor my sister, but its' me standing in the need of prayer!" This is a vital step to the cleansing of the heart. But his confession was also

C. SPECIFIC. **"I AM A MAN OF UNCLEAR LIPS."** This corruption came out of a defiled heart, for Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaks. The confession was specific. The prophet recognized and freely confessed his sin. But it was also,

B. ACCURATE. Isaiah 6:5. "I am a man of unclean lips." Behind each sinful act there is a sinful desire. Bad fruit is a result of a bad root. What is in the well will come up in the bucket. The prophet was accurate in describing the sinful condition of his heart. He was accurate about what he saw in his heart. His confession then was humble, personal, specific and accurate. This was the prophet's response to his vision of the Lord. The response of the prophet evoked,

b. God's Response. Isaiah 6:5. The response of God to the prophet's humble confession was immediate and effective. The scripture tells us that, "one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand which he had taken with tongs from off the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for." A Holy God always responds to the heartbroken sincere confession of the soul. It is significant that the live coal was taken from the altar of sacrifice which God had caused to be built for the purging of the sins of the people. There are two important symbols in this verse. First

i. The Altar of Sacrifice. Isaiah 6:6. This symbol in the New Testament meaning is the Cross of Christ. Secondly,

ii. The Live Coal. Isaiah 6:6. This is a powerful symbol of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the saving purging presence of God. The link between the live coal and the altar is inseparable. When you carry this truth over into New Testament terms, relationship between the cross and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated. The death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ made possible the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit takes the perfect redeeming work of Jesus Christ and makes it real or applies it to our hearts. The symbol of fire is applied to the flaming purging presence of the Holy

Spirit. The book of Hebrews informs us that "Our God is a consuming fire." And John said of Jesus, "After me will come someone who is more powerful than I am, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The prophet humbled himself before God and God responded by sending a seraph with a live coal to purify the prophet's life. God made provision for the sanctification of the prophet. The holiness of God demands that we be made pure and live holy lives and makes provision for its possibility. The prophet had a vision of the sanctity of God. Finally he had a vision of,

3. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. Isaiah 6:5, 8-9.

The words of the prophet indicate what He saw in this moment in the temple. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple..." The prophet cried out, "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.....Then I heard the voice of the voice of the Lord saying 'Whom shall I send?' 'Who will go for us?' He sees the "Lord or (Adonai) the God who is able to carry out His purposes." (Young - Isaiah p.237). This is His right and authority as the Sovereign Lord. He is King the Lord Almighty. David Mckenna wrote that the title Lord, reinforced His Sovereignty over the entire universe, over all its kings, over all of their nations, and over all the peoples, including the chosen children of Israel. He alone has both the authority and right to call and commission His people to service. The prophet came to realize that the recognition and acceptance of the Sovereignty of God and this is

a. A Fundamental Principle to a Relationship with God. Isaiah 6:5. This is where we must always begin. We fail to have a relationship with a Holy God, when we fail to recognize and accept His Sovereignty in our lives. He is not only to be Savior, He is to be Lord of our hearts. This is basic. This vision came to the Prophet at a time when the people had rejected the Sovereignty of God. They had rebelled against the Lordship of Jehovah. God speaks to them in the first

chapter of Isaiah verse 2-4, "Hear O heavens! Listen O earth! For the Lord has spoken; I reared children and brought them up, BUT they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey knows his master's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Ah sinful nationhave forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel. And turned their backs on Him." What tragedy is described here! The animals know who their master's are, BUT God's people do not know who their sovereign is. "The people have forsaken the Lord," said the Prophet, "they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him." Isaiah 4:1. A relationship with God begins at the end of rebellion and the beginning of surrender to the Sovereignty of the Lord..

This includes,

b. A Personal Commitment in a Relationship with God. Isaiah 6:9. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom I shall I send? And who will go for us?" and the Isaiah replied, "Here am I send me." The prophet hears the Divine challenge and responds immediately. "Here am I send me!" The prophet did not set down conditions or qualifications. He did not make excuses as did Moses when confronted by a Holy God in a burning bush. Isaiah spontaneously responded "here am I send me." In the moment upon recognition of the sovereignty of God he surrendered all to God.

Conclusion

Some years ago Merv Griffin interviewed Charlton Heston. He's the famous actor who played the part of Moses in the "Ten Commandments" and also starred in "Ben Hur." Merv Griffin asked Charlton Heston if any of the characters he had portrayed in his religious movies had changed his spiritual outlook. Heston didn't answer the question directly. He thought a moment and then simply said, "Well Merv, you can't walk barefoot down Mt Sinai and be the same person you were when you went up." The truth is you cannot remain same. You can't get close to God, know him intimately and remain the same. Certainly you cannot be casual about Him. The prophet Isaiah ventured into the presence of God and that vision of the holiness of God transformed him. He was made a cleansed and sanctified

A pair of hands, one from the left and one from the right, are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned as if supporting the globe from underneath. The background is a solid, light blue color. The globe shows the continents of North and South America in shades of brown and tan, with the oceans in a darker blue. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin on the hands and the curvature of the globe.

instrument fit to be God's servant and witness in the world. Jerry Bridges wrote "because God is holy, He requires that we be holy. Many Christians have what we might call a cultural holiness. They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. But God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God." Thomas Chisholm wrote a beautiful hymn we used to sing.

"O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer – This is my constant longing and prayer. Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures, Jesus thy perfect likeness to wear. O to be like thee! O to be like Thee blessed Redeemer, pure as thou art! Come in thy sweetness; come in thy fullness. Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.